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SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT PUBLIC LINE ON PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS

1. (U) Egyptian state media reported a January 28 phone call between President Mubarak and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in which the Egyptian leader expressed hope that the Palestinians would "close ranks in the coming period" in order to push the peace process forward and achieve the aspirations of the Palestinian people for an independent state.

2. (U) Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif told reporters upon his return from Davos that Egypt was capable of playing a key role with Israel and the Palestinians after the Hamas electoral victory since Egypt is one of a few countries that can talk to both Israel and the Palestinians. Nazif urged all parties to respect the democratic choice of the Palestinian people and give the new government a chance.

3. (U) After meeting his counterpart from Thailand on January 29, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit told reporters that Egypt would consider mediation between Hamas and Israel after formation of a new Palestinian government. Aboul Gheit said, however, that the formation of a government would take quite some time. When asked about Hamas' rejection of the Roadmap and its refusal to recognize Israel, Aboul Gheit said these issues would be addressed by all relevant parties. The Foreign Minister expressed hope that Europe would continue its assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and called for the international community to respect the will of the Palestinian people. The new political reality in Palestine, he said, would help push forward the peace process.

RICCIARDONE